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ABSTRACT

An experimental English-as-a-Second-Language (ESL) program at City College (New York) is reported. The federally funded project investigated the effectiveness of an instructional method entitled "Fluency First" and based on whole language theories of learning. It requires large amounts of reading and writing, collaboration with peers, and self-examination of learning processes. Participants were 24 students of varying ages and language backgrounds. The report consists of an overview of the approach and program, tabulation of quantitative data on ESL student achievement from 1983 to 1991, presentation of a case study of the seven Latin American students, a discussion of participating teachers' responses to the program, and a brief assessment of the implications of the research for other ESL programs, particularly in the areas of faculty development, curriculum design, and instructional material development. (MSE)

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RESEARCH ON ESL COMPOSITION INSTRUCTION: THE FLUENCY-FIRST APPROACH

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City College, New York

Paper Presented at TESOL 1992 Conference
Vancouver, B.C.

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INTRODUCTION

Elizabeth Rorschach

In the fall of 1990, ESL faculty at City College, New York, began a research project, supported by the Fund for the Improvement of Post-Secondary Education (FIPSE), to study the effects of a new approach to ESL instruction. The approach, called "Fluency First" and based on whole language theories of learning (see Freeman & Freeman 1992, and Rigg 1991, for thorough discussions of these theories), requires students to read and write massive amounts, collaborate with peers, and examine their own learning processes. I will briefly describe the approach and our program. Then Anthea Tillyer will discuss quantitative data she has collected over the past eighteen months. Then I will discuss some case studies that I've been conducting this semester, and Gail Verdi will present initial results of interviews she has conducted with teachers who've been working in our program. Finally, I will briefly discuss implications of our work for faculty and materials development as well as for program design.

The Fluency First approach differs from more traditional ESL instructional methods in three ways. First, students read and write massive amounts even at low or beginning levels. Our program at City College has no true beginners, i.e., no students with zero-level English--most of them have a basic understanding of English syntax,

and most have at least a 1,000-word vocabulary. Yet our beginning-level students (ESL 10) have probably never read a book in their own language, much less in English, and have probably never written anything longer than about 300 words in one sitting. In our program, they read four novels and write their own fifty-page book, all within a fourteen-week semester. The other two levels in our program, corresponding approximately to "intermediate" and "advanced" (ESL 20 and ESL 30, respectively), do equal amounts of reading and writing, although on progressively more academic topics. [See Fig. 1, next page, for chart of program.]

The second major difference in our approach is that the students do not read books written or adapted specifically for ESL readers. They read truly authentic texts: In ESL 10, they read novels like The Godfather, The Karate Kid, The Diary of Anne Frank, and Growing Up. In ESL 20 the students read an American history book and then three additional novels or non-fiction books whose themes relate to American culture, society, or history. These books include Great Plains, Malcolm X, and Grapes of Wrath. In ESL 30, the students read an anthropology textbook (Conformity and Conflict) and then other books and articles whose themes relate to cultural conflicts (e.g., Foreigner, and Iron and Silk). Of course all this reading is done with lots of support from the teacher and from peer reading groups. Students keep reading logs, which the teachers collect periodically to

Fig. 1

Fluency First in the

ESL Program at City College, New York

Focus	Course	Class hrs + Lab hrs
Fluency	ESL 10 (reading & writing)	9 + 1
	Students read ca. 4 novels (Diary of Anne Frank, The Godfather, Rebecca, Growing Up, The Karate Kid)	
	Students write ca. 50-page book (10,000 words)--autobiography, mystery, romance, science fiction	
	Most students also enrolled in	
	ESL 11 (oral skills)	3 + 1
Clarity	ESL 20 (writing)	6 + 1
(reading)	4	ESL 21
	Students read ca. 6 books (The American Way, Malcolm X, Great Plains, Tony Hillerman, Toni Morrison, Grapes of Wrath, Joy Luck Club)	
	Students write 50-page research project on topic in American history/society/culture	
	Most students also enrolled in	
	ESL 22 (oral skills)	3
Correctness	ESL 30 (writing)	6
	ESL 99 (reading)	4
	Students read ca. 6 books of anthropological theme (Conformity and Conflict, Foreigner, Iron and Silk)	
	Students write 50 pages of essays, letters, research paper on anthropological theme	

At each level: Students keep reading logs, do freewriting, meet in groups, collaborate to revise and edit; some sections spend an hour of class time per week in computer lab; two sections have pen-pal-ed through e-mail.

read and write comments in. In their reading groups, students share their own questions about the texts and prepare questions to present to the whole class for discussion.

The third major difference in our approach is that grammar isn't formally taught at any level--grammar discussions occur only within the context of the students' writing--and we emphasize the importance of helping students first achieve fluency in their reading and writing, before becoming concerned with clarity and correctness. We've adapted this three-level curriculum from Mayher, Lester, & Pradl (1983). "Fluency" in our model refers to the writer's ability to satisfy her own intentions in any writing task, with a minimal amount of incomprehensible text. I.e., the writer isn't blocked by fears of making errors or of not being able to come up with the right words, for instance; she can write everything she wants to write, and at least 95% of it is comprehensible to a native speaker. It may be poorly organized, but the reader can still follow the writer's ideas. It may also be full of errors, but none of these cause confusion or block understanding for the reader.

"Clarity" refers to the writer's ability to satisfy a reader's needs. Fluency is still important at this level, but the writer must now also take into account such aspects of writing as organization, having a clear focus and purpose, including details and examples to support ideas, and having definite beginnings and endings to papers.

Although the students at the beginning level may have spent some time discussing revision, it is at this level that they begin to see the importance of revision in helping them incorporate a reader's response to their writing (these students' readers include their peers as well as their teacher).

"Correctness" refers to all the aspects of form that may detract from a reader's appreciation of the text: Grammar, punctuation, mechanics, even handwriting (although most of our students have access to computers, and the problem of poor handwriting is diminishing). Although grammar can be seen as the focus of this level, it is rarely presented as Grammar. Instead, teachers discuss the problems of editing, and help the students discover successful strategies for editing their own as well as others' writing. Some grammatical problems disappear as students progress through the levels--they acquire a certain amount of English from the massive amounts of reading and writing they do at all levels (see Krashen 1992). At this level, students focus on patterns of error, learning to edit for their most frequent errors. They understand that it's too soon to expect them to produce error-free texts, yet they also understand the importance of continuing to increase their level of correctness, even after they've left our program.

So, to summarize our program: At each of the three levels, students read four books (ca. 1,000 pages) and write their own book

(ca. 50 pages or 10,000 words). They keep reading/learning logs, and they freewrite daily; they work with partners and in small groups, and they hold frequent conferences with their teacher. They progress from narrative and descriptive writing (at the beginning levels they write "novels" or "autobiographies") to more academic writing (at the advanced level they write essays and a research paper). Anthea and I will be discussing results of this changed curriculum in our papers today.

To support teachers as they become comfortable with this new curriculum and the Fluency-First approach, with its emphasis on collaborative learning, on writing and reading processes, and on new types of responding and evaluation, Adele MacGowan-Gilhooly and I have developed a teacher education program (adapted from the National Writing Project model) that includes in-service workshops, teaching logs, and informal observations. Gail's paper will discuss what she has learned from teachers who participated in this program.

CCNY FIPSE ESL PROJECT 1990/1991

(Betsy Rorschach and Adele McGowan-Gilhooly, project directors)

Comparative results: 1983 (S/F), 1986 (S/F), 1989 (S/F), 1990 (S/F), 1991 (S/S/F) (ESL 30 classes only)

Key 1: number of students records available
2: %passed this class
3: average number ESL courses prior to this one
4: average total remedial English courses (CCNY, both English and ESL Departments)
5: repetition rate for ESL 20 among students who took ESL 20
6: average number of times taking ENGLISH 110 (including W grades, and WU and WF)
7: % passing English 101 first time taking it

	SPRING83	FALL83	SPRING86	FALL86	SPRING89	FALL89	SPRING90	FALL90	SPRING91	FALL91
1.	248	231	261	228	261	225	237	221	332 *	261
2	32%	37%	35%	31%	54%	62%	64%	70%	73 %	70%
3	01.28	01.26	01.33	01.30	01.63	01.66	01.67	01.59	01.50	0.82
4	02.70	02.67	02.60	02.62	02.00	02.00	01.71	01.80	01.82	NA
5	18%	19.5%	28%	27%	23%	25%	20%	21%	23%	0%
6	02.8	02.8	02.5	02.6	02.0	01.6	01.6	01.4	NA	NA
7	57%	59%	66%	58%	72%	77%	75%	83%	86%	NA

This report was prepared from grade sheets submitted by teachers. Some of the grade sheets, especially for the earlier years, were not available; therefore; "number of student records available" does not necessarily equal the number of students actually registered in ESL 30 for that term.
* These numbers include results for summer, 91

Prepared by Anthea Tillyer, research assistant. updated 2/27/92

CASE STUDIES

Elizabeth Rorschach

It's important to note first that these case studies are very much in progress. Because of a campus-wide student strike nearly a year ago, we had to suspend work with a previous group of students and re-begin the case studies in the fall. Adele MacGowan-Gilhooly and I plan to follow two groups of students, from the beginning level (ESL 10) through our program and on into their regular course work after they have left our program. This is, of course, an immense undertaking--we hope to track the progress of almost sixty students over several semesters, and right now we're only in the middle of the second semester of this particular part of the research.

Briefly, my group has the following characteristics: Fifteen men and nine women (total = 24). Nineteen of the students are twenty-five years old or younger; only two are older than forty. Seven of them are native Spanish speakers, five are native Haitian/Creole speakers, five are native Vietnamese speakers, and the remaining seven speak Arabic, Japanese, Chinese, Russian, or Korean. Fifteen are New York City high school graduates, three came to City College with GEDs, one was a transfer from another college, and the remaining five graduated from foreign high schools. Nine of the students are SEEK (special educational opportunity students), one of

these with a GED. All of these students began their studies at City College in the fall of 1991, and twenty of them passed the ESL 10 course and are now in the intermediate level writing and reading courses. As for this group's results on the skills assessment exams given to all students entering the City University system, none of them passed the writing test, three of them passed the reading test, and twenty-one of them passed the math test. Although I have no quantitative data to support my next statement, my sense is that this group of students is fairly typical of what is found at City College, at least within the ESL department: they are a fairly heterogeneous group, of mixed linguistic and educational backgrounds, and covering a broad range of ages.

However, the group of seven Latinos is amaziningly homogeneous, which makes a convenient group for me to present today. Here is the breakdown on these students, with their first names, placement test results (MAT = math, RAT = reading, WAT = writing), country of origin, and title and length of ESL 10 project:

Alvaro (M, age 19, NYC HS, passed MAT, RAT = 13, WAT = 05) passed
Chile, "Autobiography" 33 pp.

Angela (F, age 21, GED, passed MAT, RAT = 11, WAT = 02) repeating
Colombia, "Memories" (romance novel) 53 pp.

Carmen *(F, age 20, NYC HS, passed MAT, RAT = 19, WAT = 03) passed Colombia, "Later On, A Dream Comes True" (romance novel) 51 pp.

Ernesto (M, age 19, NYC HS, passed MAT, RAT = 16, WAT = 05) passed Latin America, "Nightmare on Queen Camp" (horror novel) 50 pp.

Jesus (M, age 41, GED, passed MAT, RAT = 13, WAT = 02) repeating Colombia (Angela's uncle), "United Short Stories" (vignettes) 42 pp.

Lorenza *(F, age 18, NYC HS, passed MAT, RAT = 16, WAT = 05) passed Dominican Republic, "The Sophomore Girl" (romance novel) 46 pp.

Teresa *(F, age 20, NYC HS, passed MAT, RAT = 12, WAT = 04) passed Latin America, [no access to portfolio]

* = SEEK

Except for Jesus, the ages range between eighteen and twenty-one. Only Jesus and Angela came to City College with GEDs; the other students are graduates of the New York City public school system. They all passed the math skills assessment test, but failed the reading and writing skills assessment tests.

Let me very quickly describe the course itself, so you'll have an idea of how much and what kind of reading and writing these

students did. The course is fourteen weeks long, with a weekly breakdown of eight hours class time, one hour computer lab, and one hour writing tutorial (total semester hours = 140). The students read The Karate Kid, Treasure of the Sierra Madre, The Godfather, and Iron and Silk, reading three to four pages daily at the beginning of the term, which eventually increased to nearly twenty pages daily by about the tenth week. Each night they also wrote a page in a reading log--sometimes just a response, sometimes "dual-entry," for which they copied a sentence or two from the text and then wrote to explain why this quote was important to them. Other writing included daily in-class freewriting (ca. four pages weeekly) as well as occasional quizes or essays. Thus, counting the seven pages due weekly on their projects, the students wrote almost twenty pages each week (where one pages = 200 words).

To help students with all this reading and writing, the teacher had designed a collaborative setting, relying heavily on groups to provide feedback to the students on their writing as well as to provide a forum for discussing the readings. The teacher herself collected and commented on the students' drafts of their projects, and she also led whole-class discussions of the readings, but every activity began in small groups, allowing the students to test and refine their ideas before presenting them to the "teacher/evaluator." And since the focus in this course was on helping the students develop

fluency in writing, the teacher minimized revision and editing (although, with the use of computers, some of this occurred anyway).

For today's discussion, I'm going to focus on Carmen's in-class writing. I chose in-class writing because these are most representative of what the students can do on their own, i.e., these will show what the students learned as a result of all the reading, writing, and collaborative work they had been doing throughout the term. The first writing sample was written about the third week of the term, in response to "What were your expectations of New York before you came? And what were your reactions to New York when you got here?" The second sample was written three months later, for the final, in response to "Which of the books you read this term did you like best? Explain." [Because of time restriction, I'm going to focus on the beginnings of Carmen's essays.]

Here are Carmen's two essays:

9/17/91

For some reason I left my country
and came to New York. In November 1983,
I come to this big City. It was the first time
that I got out my country. I came alone.
When I got in the airplane I feel nervous.
I never imagine that some day I will ride it.

The airplane took 3 hours and 45 minutes flying. When it arrived to the airport I got off and I went to get some aspirin. I had a terrible headache. So I returned back without aspirin because I remembered that I didn't pick up my suitcase. Before that I knew that I need to go to the regestration office for to give them an envelope full of my personal paper. There they take me some pictures and I left. [133 words]

12/11/91

This semester I'd read four books in ESL 10. I considered one of them better than the others for different rasons. Everytime you read more than one book, you need to choose one of them and ask to yourself why you like it or enjoy that book more than the others.

The first book, I read was "Karate Kid." This book was easy to understand and the Author describe every events with a lot of

11 details. With all those details you were able
12 to see or live the stay. It was a very nice
13 for many people. Also the contents of the
14 book was very easy that made the book so
15 bore for any reader, that's what I think.
16 I know that for a child this book is so
17 excellent. [130 words]

What I notice first in Carmen's essay about coming to New York is how it confuses me in a way that's hard to pin down initially. But a second look reveals the source of the confusion. This first paragraph is typical of this essay in that it hints at events and reasons that are never explained: "For some reason I left my country and came to New York." And the last two sentences, about some official procedure, don't provide a clear time-frame: the pictures were taken before she tried to get some aspirin? or before she reclaimed her luggage? In addition, there are six verb tense errors (lines 3, 5, 6, 12, 13, 16), four word choice/syntax errors (lines 7-8, 10-11, 14, 15-16), and a misuse of "so" (line 10). Interestingly, all her end-punctuation marks are correct (12 sentences); yet the text has a staccato feel to it because so many of the sentences are short.

Let's look now at Carmen's second sample. Here I notice a much stronger introduction, something that draws me in through the use of

"you" (lines 4-6). What strikes me in particular is Carmen's mention of the importance of details, an aspect of writing that must have been mentioned frequently in her class as the students wrote their own projects. Carmen was showing the value of what she had learned by applying these criteria to the readings.

Her second paragraph is a bit more confusing, partly because of handwriting ("stay" in line 12 is probably "story") and omitted words ("book" left out at end of line 12), and partly because of mixed-up syntax (lines 13-15). But note the areas of improvement: only three verb form errors (tense, lines 1 and 10; subject-verb agreement, lines 13-14); and nine sentences (compared with twelve in the first sample), making the prose smoother. "Also" in line 13 should probably be "although", but otherwise Carmen's writing shows much more sophistication after three months of working on developing fluency. (You haven't seen the rest of Carmen's essay, but she goes on to review the other three books, ending by saying that <u>The Godfather</u> is her favorite because of its vast array of characters and its complexity--a sophisticated way to organize an essay.)

Of course, after only three months, I didn't expect Carmen's writing to be error-free. But she has become a much more fluent writer, and her progress is fairly representative of what happened with other students in this course: their writing becomes more comprehensible, but also richer. That is, the comprehensibility doesn't

come from avoiding mistakes. (Four of the twenty-four students in this class didn't pass, because their writing didn't show that they had achieved a minimum level of fluency; it will be interesting to focus on this group, to try to discern the reasons for their failures.)

In the course, students are encouraged to write as much as they can without worrying about errors, and from the reading as well as the collaborative work and their teacher's comments, they not only acquire language but also begin to understand the components of good writing. What happens with Carmen and her classmates as they move through the program, focusing next on developing clarity and then on developing correctness, will provide important information about how students learn English and become experienced writers.

TEACHERS TALK ABOUT TEACHING AND LEARNING

Gail Verdi

In the summer of 1991 Betsy Rorschach asked me if I would like to interview teachers who participated in the FIPSE project. There were twelve instructors at that time who had had at least one semester of training. To date I have interviewed and transcribed tapes of seven out of twelve. During the Spring 1992 semester, I will continue to do some interviewing until I've worked with all twelve.

Before I interviewed each instructor, I presented each with a list of questions ranging from: "What are your first memories of learning?" to "How did working with the FIPSE project influence your teaching?" I organized the questions so that the conversations would reflect the instructors' teaching and learning histories. I felt that for this project it was important to do this when trying to understand more clearly how they may have changed because of their work with FIPSE. In other words, I was looking at their past to understand who they are now.

I had anticipated that the interviews would last no longer than twenty minutes. However, my expectations were way off. The interviews turned into rich discussions of our life experiences and how life influences learning and how the way we learn influences our teaching. They lasted somewhere between one and two hours.

I was happy to discover that what I had thought would be a mechanical process--interviewing and transcribing--became a dialog and a wonderful learning experience for me, too. I spent several hours with these instructors moving through their pasts to their presents. We also spent time discussing the interview itself, and we talked about what a pleasant experience it was to sit back with a cup of coffee and just think about how we have evolved as individuals and teachers.

Every time I listen to the tapes I find myself amazed at how I connected with each one of them in some way or another. Storytelling is part of the culture of teaching and learning. Without our stories, our profession would be as blank as a business spreadsheet. I am grateful that I was asked to participate in this aspect of the research. And I'd like to thank all of the instructors who let me into their lives and homes during the fall and winter of 1991. Their names are Sheryl Branham, Alicia Concklin, Dominic Pietrosimone, Mary Egan, Shireen Tannu, Susan Weil, and Judith Wink.

Today, for the sake of brevity, I will only be reporting on the question, "How did working with the FIPSE project influence your teaching?" What I have done is to write a composite of interesting quotes taken from all of the instructors. I hope they will provide you with a picture of the innovation which is taking place within the ESL Department at City College. And it's also my hope that you will hear a

voice within this text that might echo your own or evoke some "learning change" (Lester & Onore 1991) in you.

In the past I used more traditional methods because most of the schools I worked in did. I wasn't allowed to really experiment. If I didn't go along with their syllabus, or follow their technique, I didn't fit in. They would say, "You're wrong."

When I would teach a writing class, I lectured for an hour on grammar and then I had the students write. I never questioned this. I mean, I never questioned whether the students were learning, because I always felt this was THE RIGHT WAY. And I always assumed, yes, they're learning. Without even asking them what they think or asking myself what I think. You see, when you lecture you're always in control, and you feel that they are learning the information you are providing, but now that I think about it--I don't know if they were learning.

I didn't question what I was doing and I never dared to ask students, "How do you feel about my method?"--because I didn't think it was the right thing to do. But at City College I learned that it's OK to do that. I know now that it's better for me to know what they feel

so I can improve things and change things around.

All I know is that when I started out as a teacher, I wanted to be a humanistic teacher. I didn't want to be like the teachers I had had in school, teachers that took enjoyment in humiliating students or tortured them and made us look stupid for any number of reasons.

When I first started working with the FIPSE project, I was a little confused about what I was supposed to be doing. Was I supposed to be giving manufactured answers, or should I say what they [the project leaders] wanted to hear? And what was the end result supposed to be? I thought this, but after a while, I came to realize that I was among receptive people who were just thinking about the same things I wanted to think about. This really was a relief for me. For the first time, as an instructor, I felt I got to learn about teaching. The environment, the trust, the exercises, the exchange and the most important thing--the sense of community--allowed all of my ideas to mushroom, to flower.

What we are going through here is a real revolution or evolution.

Looking at ourselves.

Keeping notebooks on what is going on in our

classrooms.

And also with what is going on with ourselves as a learning experience.

I have a thing that I do: I don't go into their groups unless they invite me. They can also kick me out. If they want to be alone, they can say, "OK, we're through with you." Sometimes I'm just not invited in anymore, so I have nothing left to do. I feel rejected.

I know that's good, but I still feel bad. I have had it happen where somebody will come in and say, "Is this a classroom?" And I'll say, "Yes, this is." I think this is because I may be over in the corner talking to a student while everybody is busy in their groups. So they'll ask, "Where is the teacher?"

I am trying to relinquish more and more of my authority within the classroom. I'm trying to empower my students and to get them to accept responsibility for their own learning--for the direction that the class is going. I do less teacher talk, and they do more writing. I'm finding that groups are very appropriate now.

Negotiating the responsibility of each student in a group provides students with an opportunity to take charge of their learning. Who will speak first? What

should they focus on? These are decisions they have to make together. In addition to having students work in groups, and responding to peer writing, I'm having them make photocopies of their papers for the members of their groups. They read silently and then write a comment. After everyone writes, students discuss both their texts and the reader's comments. What students discover through this process is that three people will respond in very different ways. This raises the issue of subjectivity in teacher response, and students begin to realize that we all read differently and bring to a text our own experiences.

One critical incident in my learning to be a teacher came this semester when all of the stuff I had been exposed to in the FIPSE project suddenly hit home and I found myself putting a lot of that into practice. I found myself saying things like, "Don't worry about grammar, don't worry about spelling, don't worry about punctuation. Just get your ideas down on paper." And it worked. Their grammar is still kind of rough, but as far as generating interesting ideas, I think it still worked.

In addition I began talking to my students individually, and I found that they had come to class under the impression that they were supposed to say what I

would be interested in hearing instead of considering what really interested them. I began thinking of my classroom differently. I began to see it as a forum I provide for students to express themselves. I've come to realize that you have to give students a stage more than not. Otherwise, they are going to become passive.

When Betsy and Adele began this project I regarded it with a stalactite of salt. I thought, "MY GOD. This is absolute bullshit." I used to argue with Betsy. I used to argue with Adele in my journal, AND SHE WAS READING MY JOURNAL. I don't know whether it's that I had an exceptional class this semester, but I'm beginning to take this stuff seriously. Therefore, what I should do is to reread the journal and see how I would react to those same arguments now. It was really nice working with people who aren't defensive. To me that's one of the main things that made this FIPSE project a success.

One of the participants seemed to sum up how we all feel about what we've experienced at City and I will allow her to speak for us:

I want to continue participating in the FIPSE project. So it seems a little surreal to me to participate in

it for just one semester or one year and then have to stop. It seems like a contradiction to the whole philosophy. It should be an ongoing process, and there was always good food. And I think we've all decided that we all need a safe place to bitch and learn.

IMPLICATIONS OF THIS RESEARCH

Elizabeth Rorschach

Very quickly, I would like to discuss the implications of this research for other ESL programs. First of all, for faculty development, the implications are clear. Teachers need continual opportunities to meet and discuss learning/teaching; if the only way to get adjuncts to attend these meetings is to pay them, then money must be found. We cannot continue to rely on adjuncts to do the right thing out of loyalty to the field or love for their students. We must ourselves do the right thing, and pay them for the work they do. We should also encourage all teachers in our programs--whether fulltimers or adjuncts--to keep teaching logs and use these to become "reflective practitioners" (Schon 1983), that is, to continue reflecting on what happens in their classrooms so that they can gain a better understanding of their students' learning processes.

A second implication, which we also feel is quite obvious, is for program and curriculum design: Have students do <u>much more</u> reading and writing. We've discovered that our students are capable of reading and writing incredible amounts, and I suspect that students at true beginning levels can begin doing real reading and writing much sooner that we like to allow them to do. And let everyone worry less about grammar. This is not to suggest that grammar isn't important--

only that there's no point in having error-free writing that is also content-free. Focus on content first, on developing the students' fluency, and grammar will improve in the process.

A final implication may not be quite so obvious, yet it's important as well. Materials development has become an extremely minor activity in our program, since teachers rely on students to come up with questions about the texts they're reading (and even sometimes to choose the texts; see Mlynarczyk 1991). We've upset a few ESL textbook publishers because we've stopped using books written for the ESL market (except for a grammar reference book)--and ours is a big program. Take advantage of novels (ones with film versions are especially useful)--action-packed books are infinitely more interesting than any diverse collection of articles, and the students will learn more language from a book they read with interest than from one they read with reluctance. A course run this way, without 45 pre-planned lessons, is a lot more risky, but it's also a lot more fun for everyone, including the teacher.

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